THE

Chriſtian Hiſtory;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival of Religion in *England Scotland* and *America*.

To be publiſh'd *Weekly*.

Saturday JUNE 4. 1743. § N°. 14.

Dr. Cotton Mather's *Complaint of the* lamentable Decay *of* Religion *continued.*

'THE Complaints of the *Corruptions* that are become 'epidemical in the Lives of *Chriſtians*, and little 'ſhort of *univerſal*, are every where, every Day 'wounding our Ears. At laſt they are come ſo far, that one 'of the *Engliſh Biſhops*, has let fall this mournful Paſſage; *Were 'a wiſe Man to chooſe his Religion, by the Lives of them who pro-'feſs it, perhaps Chriſtianity would be the laſt Religion he would 'chooſe.* And, ſadder yet! There has been a Set of *Proteſ-'tants* in the beſt Iſland, under Heaven: *Proteſtants*, who 'have made a *Profeſſion* of a more than ordinary *Purity*; 'there was a Time when their *Behaviour* did much anſwer 'their *Profeſſion*. But I have lately read another, inſulting 'over them, *That theſe alſo have of later Time almoſt wholly 'loſt the Reputation which Mankind once allowed unto them.*

'In theſe deplorable Circumſtances of *Chriſtianity*, what 'ſhall be done? It is now paſt meer *Conjecture* with me; I 'am now got up unto an abſolute *Certainty*; That we are 'entred into that Age, wherein the *primitive Chriſtianity* ſhall 'be *revived* unto *Aſtoniſhment*; the Enemies of it, ſhall *ſee it, 'and be grieved*, they ſhall *gnaſh their Teeth, and melt away.*'

Thus have we given from the moſt authentick Teſtimonies of divers of the *moſt venerable Fathers* of NEW ENGLAND, a brief Account of the *State of Religion* in their Days under theſe *two* general Heads, (1) Of our *original Settlement* by an eminently pious People for the Sake of *Religion*; with the *Principles, Spirit, Power and* PREVALENCE of RELIGION a-

mong

mong the *primitive Planters* and thoſe whom they bro't over with them. (2) An Account of the *great and lamented* DECAY *of* RELIGION in the *following Generations*. And we are glad to find our Accounts from thoſe venerable Men ſo acceptable to our ſerious Readers; who love their Memory, and find their Souls revived with theſe *hiſtorical Extracts* from their pious Writings.

We might have cited divers other Teſtimonies: But theſe may ſuffice to clear the Heads aboveſaid; and by repreſenting, *firſt* the lively PREVALENCE, and *then* the great and ſad DECAY of *Religion* in this *Country*, prepare our Minds the more to receive the Accounts of its ſurprizing REVIVAL in a greater or leſs Degree, in many Parts of the Land.

If this Paper be encouraged, we ſhall every now and then on proper Occaſions, bring *thoſe* and *others* of our moſt *excellent Predeceſſors* on the publick Stage; to excite and teach us, as when they were living, revive our Love and Reverence to them, and afreſh inſpire us, by the divine Concurrence, with their pious Principles and Spirit. But we ſhall take our Leave of them at preſent: And go on to obſerve

1. Some *Inſtances of the tranſient* REVIVAL of *Religion* in ſome *particular Places* in the Midſt of theſe Decays.

And then

2. The *more ſurprizing* and *more extenſive* REVIVALS of it in the *preſent Day*.

I. *Some* INSTANCES *of the tranſient* REVIVAL *of* RELIGION *in ſome* particular Places *in the Midſt of theſe Decays*.

Our FIRST *Inſtance* of ſome *Revivals* in this Land was about the Year 1680.

And as we would have as little of our *own* Compoſure in this *Chriſtian Hiſtory* as may be, but rather fill it with the more authentick Accounts of *others*; we beg Leave to repreſent this Article by tranſcribing a few Paſſages concerning it from the ſame *manuſcript Sermon* of the Rev. Mr. *Prince*'s, out of which we gave the *Extract* in *Page* 93, 94. *which Sermon* with *three others* on the ſame Subject have been earneſtly deſired by many to be printed: But not finding Time enough to tranſcribe them, it has been hitherto delay'd. Repreſenting how bitterly our *pious Fathers* lamented the growing *Decay* of *Piety* in NEW ENGLAND, from the Year 1670 and onward, as in the *Extract mentioned* in page 93, Mr. *Prince* goes on as follows.

'It

'It wou'd fill a Volumn, tho' it would be very affecting to 'repeat their *heavy Lamentations* publiſhed in their *Election-* 'Sermons: and I cou'd heartily wiſh, they were *reprinted* 'among us, eſpecially the *Election Sermons* preached between 'the Year 1660 and 1686, when we loſt our primitive 'Charters and our Elections, were for a Time ſuſ- 'pended; that we might ſee the *great Concern* of our *pious* 'Fathers for the Flouriſhing of CHRIST's *ſpiritual Kingdom* 'in the *Power of Godlineſs* as well as the *ſcriptural Form* there- 'of in this Land, both among *themſelves* and *their Succeſſors*.

'As we have had *moſt pious and prayerful Anceſtors*, a Peo- 'ple near and dear to GOD, and in *Covenant* with him; O 'the *Multitudes* of *earneſt Prayers* they have made and *Days* 'of *Prayers* they have kept, both *privately* and *publickly* for 'US; that GOD would conſtantly maintain his *Truths*, and 'pour out his *Spirit*, and *revive his Work* among thoſe who 'followed them.

'In 1679, the *Maſſachuſetts Government* called a *Synod* of 'all the *Churches* in that Colony to conſider and anſwer theſe 'two moſt important QUESTIONS, (1) *What were the* 'Evils *that have provoked the* LORD *to bring his Judgments on* 'NEW ENGLAND? (2) *What is to be* done *that ſo theſe* 'Evils *may be reformed?* And among their *Anſwers* to the 'ſecond *Queſtion*, the *Synod* adviſed the *ſeveral Churches* to an 'expreſs *and ſolemn Renewal of* COVENANT *with* GOD and 'one another: with which many complied, and thereupon 'there was a conſiderable *Revival* of *Religion* among them. 'And Dr. *Cotton Mather* tells us (in his *Church Hiſtory* of 'NEW ENGLAND, Book V.) that "Very remarkable was "theBleſſing of God on theChurches,which did not ſo ſleep "[as ſome others] not only by a great Advancement of Ho- "lineſs in the People; but alſo by a great Addition of *Con-* "*verts* to their holy Fellowſhip---And many thouſand Spec- "tators will teſtify that they never ſaw the ſpecial Preſence "of the great God our Saviour more notably diſcovered then "in the Solemnity of theſe Opportunities.

'Dr. *Cotton Mather* likewiſe adds, that "The *Maſſachu-* "*ſetts* Colony was not alone in ſuch Eſſays of Reformation; "but the Colonies of *Plymouth* and *Connecticut*, &c. And 'yet ſadly goes on in the following Words, "Our manifold "Indiſpoſitions to recover the *dying Power of Godlineſs*, were "puniſhed with ſucceſſive Calamities; under all of which "the *Apoſtacies* from *that Godlineſs* have rather *proceeded* than

" abated. Altho' there has been a gloriousProfeſſion of Reli-
" gion made by the Body of this People unto this Day ; yea
" and altho' there be *Thouſands*, which by *keeping their Hearts*
" *with all Diligence*, and by *ordering their Converſations aright*,
" juſtify their Profeſſion ; yet *the Number* of them that ſo
" ſtrictly walk with GOD, has been *wofully decaying*. The
" *old Spirit of* NEW ENGLAND has been ſenſibly going out
" of the World, as the *old Saints* in whom it was, have gone :
" And inſtead thereof the Spirit of the World, with a la-
" mentable Neglect of ſtrict Piety has crept in upon the
" riſing Generation."

' This he publiſhed in 1702 : and yet ever ſince we have
' been *generally* growing worſe and worſe ; notwithſtanding
' all the Methods uſed by God and Man, Miniſters and Ma-
' giſtrates, to reclaim and awaken us.

Thus that Revival of Religion in NEW ENGLAND about the Year 1680, ſoon paſs'd away.

A *ſecond Inſtance* of ſome *Revival* of *Religion* in *this Country* was about the Year 1705 ; which I find in a *Book* printed at *London* in 1706, entituled, *A Help to National Reformation* ; and in three *Manuſcript Letters* of the Rev. Mr. *Samuel Danforth* of *Taunton*, a worthy Son of the Rev. Mr. *Danforth* of *Roxbury* before mentioned.

The Paſſages in the ſaid printed Book are as follow,

' A Reverend Divine of *New-England* in his Letter dated
' from *Boſton* the 23 of *November* 1705, ſays thus :
' Our *Societies* for the *Suppreſſion of Diſorders*, increaſe and
' and proſper in this Town ; there are two more ſuchSocieties
' added unto the former ; there are alſo *religiousSocieties* with-
' out Number in *this Country* that meet at proper Times, to
' *pray* together, and *repeat Sermons*, and forward one another
' in the Fear of God.

' In ſome Towns of this Country, the Miniſters, who fur-
' niſh themſelves with a *Society* for the *Suppreſſion of Diſorders*,
' hardly find any notorious Diſorders to be ſuppreſſed : But
' then their Societies are helpful unto them in doing Abun-
' dance of Good for the Advancement of *ſerious Religion* in
' the Neighbourhood, and to make their Miniſtry much more
' profitable in the weekly Exerciſe of it.

' A Gentleman writes from *New-England*, in his Letter of
' the 20th of *November* 1705. " To gratify your Deſires to
' know what Progreſs we make here in our Societies, I make
' bold to add a Line or two to certify, That in *Boſton* the

' *Societies*

'*Societies* for *ſuppreſſing Diſorders* (of which mention was made 'in my former Letters) are upheld, and *two other* Societies 'of the ſame Nature erected. All which are ſpirited to be 'active, according to their Abilities and Influence, to pro-'mote Virtue, and diſcountenance and ſuppreſs Vice. And 'not only in *Boſton* are ſuch good Things done, and doing, 'but in *many Places in the Province beſides*. Omitting many 'other Things that might be enumerated as to other Places, 'I ſhall ſum up in ſhort, an Account of what hath been done 'in a Town called *Taunton*, through the rich Mercy of God: 'The Reverend Mr. *--------*-*Miniſter* there, having ſeen 'ſome printed Accounts of the *Methods* for *Reformation* in '*Old England*, in Imitation thereof (after earneſt Prayers to 'God for Succeſs) obtained of *ſeveral Inhabitants* of the Place '(that were noted for Sobriety and Zeal againſt Sin) to meet 'with him *once in each Month*, to conſult what might be done 'to promote a *Reformation* of Diſorders there. And after a '*Day* improved in *Faſting and Prayer* together, they firſt at-'tempted to reduce the Heads of Families to ſet up *Family* '*Worſhip*; and God gave them great Succeſs; ſo that moſt 'of the Families in the large Towns hearkened to their Ex-'hortations and Reproofs; and ſet upon the Practice of *Fa-'mily Prayer* Morning and Evening; every Day having heard 'and read ſome Accounts of the *religious Societies of young Men* 'in *London*, they were encouraged to endeavour the like among 'them. And beyond their Expectation (God working with 'them) prevailed with the *greateſt Part of the Youth*, to form 'themſelves into *Societies* for *religious Exerciſes*, ſigning ſome 'good Rules to be obſerved by them therein, much like the '*Orders* of the *Societies* of *young Men* in *London*. The good 'Effect whereof was the putting an End to & utter Baniſhment 'of their former diſorderly and profane *Meetings to drink*, *&c.* 'and to the great Grief of godly Minds'.

The *three Manuſcript Letters* from the ſaid Rev. Mr. *Danforth* of *Taunton* are theſe,

S I R, *Tanton*, *Feb.* 20th, 1704,5.

'WE are much encouraged by an *unuſual* and *amazing Im-'preſſion*, made by GOD'S SPIRIT on *all Sorts* among 'us, *eſpecially* on the *young Men* and *Women*. Its almoſt in-'credible how many viſit me with Diſcoveries of the *extreme* '*Diſtreſs of Mind* they are in about their *ſpiritual Condition*.

[* i. e. The Rev. Mr. *Samuel Danforth*]

'And

‘ And the *young Men* inſtead of their merry Meetings, are now ‘ forming themſelves into *regular Meetings* for *Prayer*, *Repe-* ‘ *tition of Sermons*, *ſigning the ſame Orders*, which I obtained ‘ ſome Years ago a Copy of from the *young Men's Meeting* in ‘ the *North* of BOSTON. Some awful *Deaths* and amazing ‘ *Providences* have concur'd, with the *Word preached* to this ‘ good Effect. The Profaneſt among us ſeem'd ſtartled at ‘ the *ſudden Change* upon the *riſing Generation*. We need ‘ much Prayer, that *theſe Strivings* of the SPIRIT, may have ‘ a *ſaving Iſſue* and Effect. Our *Family Meetings* are more ‘ and more frequented: And *two more Family Meetings* ſetting ‘ up at *two remote Corners* of our large *Town*; where we deſpair- ‘ ed of ſeeing any. *Our laſt Society*, which was Yeſterday, had ‘ almoſt nothing to do, only to *expreſs their Joy* to each other, ‘ that the diſorderly Concourſe of Youth was now over. We ‘ are both, *Church*, and all *Inhabitants* to *renew* the *Covenant* ‘ *for Reformation*, *this Week*; which this People made with ‘ God, the laſt *Philip Indian War*. We agreed to turn our ‘ *next Society Meeting* into a *Faſt* alſo, for ſpecial Reaſons: ‘ One of which was that we find *Prayer* our *beſt Weapon* to ‘ reform Vice; and the Devil's Kingdom can't ſtand before ‘ it; alſo as worldly Men when they find the World comes ‘ hovering in upon them, will pull the harder for it; which ‘ ſhould make us pray more earneſtly and fervently: having ‘ had Encouragement ſo far, that when we can do nothing ‘ elſe but ſtretch our withered Hands in God's Work, yet ‘ even doing of *that* ſhall not be in Vain. Some *Remarkables* ‘ in the Progreſs of our Reformation Work I ſhall not commit ‘ to writing, at preſent: but if common Fame do not bring 'em ‘ to you, ſhall reſerve them to be diſcover'd by Word of ‘ Mouth. The Lord be with you all Amen.

Yours intirely, *S. D.*

SIR, *March 5th*, 1704,5.

‘IT was a moſt comfortable Day the *firſt* of *March*, when ‘ we renew'd the *Reformation Covenant*, of which I ſuppoſe ‘ you have a Copy by you already: only we added an Engage- ‘ ment to reform *Idleneſs*, unneceſſary *frequenting Houſes* of ‘ *public Entertainment*, *irreverent Behaviour* in *public Worſhip*, ‘ *Neglect of Family-Prayer*, *Promiſe-breaking*, and *walking* ‘ *with Slanderers* and *Reproachers of others*; and that we ſhould ‘ all in our Families be ſubject to good Orders and Govern- ‘ ment. It was read to the *Brethren* and *Siſters* in the *Fore-*

‘ *noon*

‘ *noon* ; they *ſtanding up* as an outward Sign of their inward ‘ Conſent to the *reſt* of the *Inhabitants*. In the *Afternoon* ‘ *they* ſtanding up alſo when it was read ; and then every one ‘ that ſtood up, brought his *Name* ready *writ in a Paper* and ‘ put into the Box, that it might be put on Church Record. ‘ The *Forenoon-Text* was *Hebrews* 12. 4. About *reſiſting and* ‘ *ſtriving againſt Sin*, the commonEnemy of us all. The *Af-* ‘ *ternoon-Text* was 2*Chron.* 29. 10. We gave Liberty to all ‘ Men and Women Kind, from *ſixteen Years old and upwards* ‘ to act with us ; and had *three hundred Names* given in *to liſt* ‘ *under Chriſt*, againſt the Sins of the Times. The whole ‘ acted with ſuch Gravity, and Tears of good Affection, as ‘ would affect an Heart of Stone. *Parents* weeping for Joy, ‘ ſeeing their *Children* give their *Names* to *Chriſt*. And we ‘ had *ſeveral Children* of the *Church* in *neighbouring Towns*, ‘ came & joined with us in it. We have *a hundred more* that ‘ will yet bind themſelves in the *Covenant*, that were then *de-* ‘ *tained* fromMeeting. Let GOD have theGlory. *Yeſterday* ‘ fourteen were *propounded* to the *Church* ; ſome for *full* ‘ *Communion* ; others for *Baptiſm*, being adult Perſons. All ‘ this calls for *Prayer* and *humble Walking* with GOD, and ‘ hope in his Mercy. Yours, *S. D.*

SIR, *Taunton*, *March* 20*th*, 1704,5.

‘I Have now yours,and have ſent you twoLetters thisWeek ; ‘ I have little to add, and no Time to inlarge : But *my* ‘ *Time is ſpent* in *daily Diſcourſe* with the *young People*, viſiting ‘ me with their *Doubts*, *Fears* and *Agonies*. RELIGION ‘ *flouriſhes to Amazement and Admiration* ; that ſo, we ſhould ‘ be at once touched with Soul-Affliction, and this in all ‘ Corners of the Place ; and that *our late Converſions* ſhould ‘ be attended with *more than uſual Degrees of Horror* ; and ‘ *Satan* permitted to wreſtle with them by *extraordinary Temp-* ‘ *tations*, and Aſſaults, and Hours of Darkneſs. But I hope ‘ the *deeper the Wound the more ſound may be the Cure* : and I ‘ have little Time to think of worldly Matters ; ſcarce Time ‘ to ſtudy Sermons, as I uſed to do ; but find GOD can bleſs ‘ mean Preparations, when-ever he pleaſes ; that ſuch ſhall ‘ be moſt cried up and commended, which I have had ſcarce ‘ Time to methodize. I think ſometimes that the *Time* of ‘ the *pouring out of the* SPIRIT *upon all Fleſh*, may be at ‘ the Door. Lets be earneſt in Prayer that CHRIST's

Kingdom

' *Kingdom may come* ; and that being anInſtrument of good to ' others, I may not be my ſelf *a Caſt-away*. Yours, *S. D.*

We conclude *this Head* with thoſe particular *Inſtances* of the *Revival* of *Religion* at *Northampton* in the Days of the late venerable Mr. *Solomon Stoddard* ; as the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* gives them in the two following Paragraphs, written in 1736.

' I am the *third Miniſter* that has been ſettled in theTown : ' the Rev. Mr. *Eleazer Mather*, who was the *firſt*, was or- ' dained in *July*, 1669. He was one whoſe Heart was *much* ' in his Work, abundant in *Labours* for the good of precious ' Souls ; he had the highEſteem and greatLove of his People, ' and was bleſſed with no ſmall *Succeſs*. The Rev.Mr. *Stod-* ' *dard*, who ſucceeded him, came firſt to the Town the *No-* ' *vember* after his Death, but was not ordained till *September* ' 11. 1672, and died *Feb.* 11. 1728,9. So that he continued ' in the Work of the Miniſtry here, from his firſt coming to ' Town,near 60Years. And as he was eminent and *renowned* ' for his Gifts and Grace ; ſo he was bleſſed, from the begin- ' ning, with *extraordinary Succeſs* in his Miniſtry, in the Con- ' verſion of manySouls. He had *five Harveſts*,as he called them : ' The *firſt* was about 57Years ago,[i.e. about theYear 1679.] ' the *ſecond* about 53 Years, [i.e. about the Year 1683,] the ' *third* about 40, [i.e. about theYear 1696.] the *fourth* about ' 24, [i.e. about the Year 1712.] the *fifth* and laſt about 18 ' Years ago,[i.e. about theYear 1718.] Some of theſeTimes ' were much more remarkable than others, and the ingather- ' ing of Souls more plentiful. Thoſe that were about 53,and ' 40, and 24Years ago,were much greater than either the *firſt* ' or the *laſt*, : but in *each* of them, I have heard my *Grandfather* ' ſay, the *bigger* Part of the *young* People in the Town,ſeemed ' to be mainly concerned for their eternal Salvation.

' After the *laſt* of theſe came a far more degenerate Time, ' (at leaſt among the youngPeople) I ſuppoſe, than ever before. ' Mr. *Stoddard*, indeed, had the Comfort before he died, of ' ſeeing a Time where there were no ſmall Appearances of a ' divine Work amongſt ſome, and a conſiderable *Ingathering* ' of Souls, even after I was ſettled with him in the *Miniſtry*, ' which was about *two* Years before his Death ; and I have ' Reaſon to *bleſs* God for the great Advantage I had by it. In ' theſe *two* Years there were near *twenty* that Mr. *Stoddard* ' hoped to be ſavingly converted ; but there was nothing of ' any *general Awakening*. '